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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 3991
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3854
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7186
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI 1269
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TASHKENT 001829

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR G/TIP (MEGAN HALL AND BRITTANY BROWN), INL (ANDREW
BUHLER); ABU DHABI/DUBAI FOR TIP OFFICER; ASTANA FOR
ALMATY/USAID

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [AE](#) [RS](#) [KZ](#) [GG](#) [IS](#) [TH](#)

TU, UZ

SUBJECT: NEW HUMAN TRAFFICKING OBSERVATIONS FROM KEY NGO

REF: A. TASHKENT 1652

[1](#)B. TASHKENT 1806

Classified By: Poloff Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On October 16, DCM, poloff, and visiting G/TIP officer met with anti-TIP NGO Istiqbolli Avlod to discuss new trends. New data on assistance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to Uzbek victims through the NGO indicates that the UAE is still the largest destination for sexually exploited females, although labor trafficking among men and women to Kazakhstan and Russia is sharply increasing. Istiqbolli Avlod cited tougher laws and enforcement for a decrease in trafficking to Israel, and Georgia gets high marks from NGO staff (despite anecdotal accounts it is a major transit point for Uzbeks). The NGO reported overcrowding at its Tashkent shelter, based in part on increased trafficking in the Karakalpakstan region (victims often come to Tashkent for help) as well as extensive efforts to seek out victims in the UAE and help them return. Istiqbolli Avlod said the GOU is more cooperative than before and has adopted more sensitive investigative policies which help victims. Increased signs of willingness to engage on the TIP issue needs to be followed through with key legislation. End summary.

RECENT DATA

[1](#)2. (SBU) The local anti-TIP NGO Istiqbolli Avlod provided updated data for 2005, 2006, and the first three quarters of 2007 on the number of trafficking victims assisted by the IOM. A total of 1,275 Uzbek TIP victims received assistance from IOM from 2005 through September 2007, of which 85% were females. However, the number of known male victims is sharply increasing, from 30 in 2005 and 58 in 2006 to 101 thus far in 2007. In 2007 IOM has already assisted 371 victims from Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan continues to be almost entirely a source country for trafficking; since 2005 IOM assisted only two victims in-transit and none whose final

destination was Uzbekistan. The vast majority (81 percent) of assisted victims since 2005 were sexually exploited females, whereas all male victims and the remaining female victims were exploited for labor.

13. (SBU) The UAE remains the biggest destination for trafficked Uzbeks, accounting for 551 (43 percent) of the 1,275 cases assisted by IOM. There are fewer Uzbeks bound for Israel, dropping from 34 cases in 2005 to 11 in 2006 and four so far through the first three quarters of 2007. NGO staff attributed this to tough new Israeli laws and vigorous prosecution. The number of cases involving Kazakhstan has sharply increased, from 22 in 2005 to 52 in 2006 and 85 so far in 2007 (the majority were males). This is not surprising given the increasing economic disparity between the neighboring countries and the corresponding increase in labor migration north from Uzbekistan. Similarly, the number of IOM-assisted Uzbek victims trafficked to Russia climbed from 14 in 2005 to 43 through the third quarter of 2007; the number is evenly split between males and females. Other major destinations for Uzbek trafficking victims are Thailand (70) and Turkey (67), and there have been smaller numbers of Uzbeks trafficked to many other European and Asian countries.

THROUGH GEORGIA TO UAE

14. (C) IOM assisted only eight Uzbeks trafficked through Georgia since 2005, however the MFA cited Georgia as a major transit point and source of illegal documents in an October 16 meeting with poloff and visiting G/TIP officer (reftel B). The same day, DCM, poloff, and G/TIP officer interviewed a

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young Uzbek woman who was just repatriated from the UAE, which she says she reached via Tbilisi. She was part of a group of five who traveled from Tashkent almost four years ago. The accompanying trafficker provided false Georgian travel documents on the flight to Tbilisi, where she spent three weeks before onward travel to the Emirates. Ultimately arrested in the UAE for immigration violations, she spent six months in prison in Sharjah before acknowledging she was an Uzbek citizen and accepting IOM assistance. Nodira Karimova, Director of Istiqbolli Avlod, says the victims' fear and reluctance to talk is a major impediment in providing timely assistance and identifying more traffickers. She also noted that Georgia has an excellent reputation among activists for investigating TIP cases.

ACTIVIST FREQUENTLY VISITS UAE

15. (C) Karimova, whose outstanding defense of victims has been detailed in the Department's TIP Report, personally travels to the UAE at least twice a year to visit prisons and identify victims in need of assistance. Her efforts result in spikes in the number of Uzbek victims repatriated to Tashkent, which in turn places added burdens on her organization's shelter, one of only two operating in Uzbekistan. Karimova said "my great dream is to have a representative in the UAE full-time," and she noted that IOM does not operate an office there. She also stated there is a desperate need for a TIP shelter in the UAE, and she told stories of how she scrambled to find temporary lodging from charitable contacts for women that come forward or are awaiting repatriation assistance. Karimova feels the Uzbek Consulate in Dubai does a decent job of providing prompt documentation for Uzbek victims, however there is no financial assistance available and they must turn to IOM. (Note: Karimova's next visit to the UAE will be in December and she would welcome the opportunity to liaise with Embassy Abu Dhabi/Consulate Dubai's anti-TIP officer. End note.)

KARAKALPAKSTAN SEES TIP INCREASE

16. (C) The census of the Tashkent TIP shelter on October 16 was 13, compared with six at the time of poloff's previous visit in September (reftel A). The capacity of the shelter is eight, so some women are doubling up on couches or sleeping on the floor. Karimova noted that four of the 13 women are from Karakalpakstan province in northwest Uzbekistan near the Aral Sea. She said that labor exploitation trafficking to Kazakhstan is on the rise in this region because of the particularly poor economic conditions in the Aral Sea zone and the geographic and linguistic proximity to Kazakhstan (the Karakalpak dialect is linguistically closer to Kazakh than to Uzbek). Many buses in Nukus, the provincial capital, have signs offering employment in Kazakhstan. Karimova reports that there is a partner NGO based in Nukus "that does a wonderful job," but they have not been able to officially register. Poloff raised this issue with MFA the same day, and although MFA disputed the information, they offered to look into the issue (reftel B).

GOU MORE COOPERATIVE

17. (C) Karimova noted continued progress in working cooperatively with the GOU, particularly "joint efforts with the prosecutor's office," which has begun requesting the participation of Istiqbolli Avlod's in-house attorney when interviewing victims during investigations. She said this results in more professional, dignified treatment of victims by investigators, and the victims are more likely to talk freely when the attorney is present. This is significant

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because the prosecutors do not pursue a case if the victim does not offer complete testimony, and only two of the women presently at the shelter are willing to tell their stories to authorities. There are still lingering problems with investigators who "treat the women as prostitutes" and feel "they knew what they were getting themselves into," but she credited substantial progress to the series of INL and USAID-funded trainings held throughout the country. The GOU also cited improved awareness from these trainings and requested a wider scope of USG programs (reftel B).

18. (C) Karimova also appreciates the GOU's restraint in prosecuting returned TIP victims, who can be fined up to USD 500 for illegal border crossing stemming from their outbound travel but are otherwise not punished. She said it is actually much better for returning victims to "lose" their passports and return on consulate-issued travel documents, in which case the illegal exit stamps are not an issue. She implied that GOU officials are well aware of this practice but go easy on the victims, which the NGO sees as a welcome sign of compassion.

COMMENT

19. (C) Karimova said her GOU contacts were angered by this year's Tier 3 designation, but it is a good sign that she feels her NGO "is treated more and more like a partner." There are increasing signs that the GOU may be willing to engage further on the TIP issue, especially in expanded training programs, although the GOU needs to follow through on introducing, passing, and implementing draft legislation, enhancing prosecutorial efforts, and providing assistance to victims. The new data on the number of IOM-assisted trafficking victims indicates that TIP will remain a problem in Uzbekistan for the foreseeable future, especially labor trafficking. End comment.

NORLAND